

## **Exploring Analysis on Sinking Qi to Cinnabar Field**

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No matter you are a Health Qigong beginner or an experienced exerciser for years, you might not feel unfamiliar the term “Sinking Qi to Cinnabar Field(qì chén dān tián)”, because nearly every stance emphasizes that “Sinking Qi to Cinnabar Field” is essential for exercising Health Qigong. However, few of exercisers can clearly explain how it is when asked how is ” Sinking Qi to Cinnabar Field”. Analysis finds that it is influenced mainly by conventional way of thinking, which results in a tendency of ambiguous perceptual mastering of many terms of Health Qigong, and just making use of it rather than discussing it in depth. In fact, with the change in the context of modern people, if some classic terms originated from tradition can be illustrated with modern language, it can not only enrich the basic theoretical knowledge of Health Qigong so as to promote discipline building and scientific development of Health Qigong, but also help people correctly understand Health Qigong and scientifically exercise Health Qigong. In order to arouse people’s serious attention to this issue, I hereby attempt to make a brief analysis of ”Sinking Qi to Cinnabar Field”, hopefully it could serve as a modest spur.

### **I. Location and Functions of Cinnabar Field**

According to the origin of history, Cinnabar Field is an important position for Taoist practitioners to regulate mind and build up will. In *A Brief Talk on Diantian Theory by Chinese Taoists*, Xiao Zhicai expatiated the records in various ancient literatures about the location of Cinnabar Field and its important functions. Cai Mingzong also made meticulous discussion on Diantian in his doctoral dissertation “Discussion on Cinnabar Field Mystery and Research on the Function of Delaying Aging of Female Ovariectomized Rats by Catgut Embedment in Cinnabar Field Area. In their opinions, Cinnabar Field is a very special and important position in one’s body. It is called “*Mingmen* (Life Gate)” in *Neijing*, located between the eyes and joining in encephalon, which is the vital position. It is called “Dynamic Qi between Kidneys”, located between the two kidneys, for men to store essence and women to tie ovicell, which is the origin of vitality. One is the Upper

Cinnabar Field, and the other is the Lower Cinnabar Field; between the two there is the Middle Cinnabar Field, which is in charge of human being's Qi, blood and water and food, covering heart, lungs, liver, spleen and stomach, etc. These three need and work mutually, containing human being's essence, Qi and spirit. The three Cinnabar Fields are not a point but an area. The Upper Cinnabar Field is located in Yintang Area, the Middle Cinnabar Field is located in the Area below Heart and the Lower Cinnabar Field is located in the Area below Umbilicus. The ancient literatures gave the most detailed description of the Lower Cinnabar Field Area, pointing out that that the Lower Cinnabar Field is located three cun(Chinese inch) below Umbilicus, between the two kidneys and back, and in the middle of human body, covering an area of four cun.

The Taoist cognition of Cinnabar Field is somewhat different from Medicine's cognition thereof. Specifically, the common standpoint of both lies in that Cinnabar Field is the residence of original essence, original qi and original spirit. According to this standpoint, Taoism regards Cinnabar Field as the position for keeping qi with ideation, as well as a main site and fundamental place for condensation of essence, qi and spirit. This kind of cognition produced profound influence on the Qigong Science and even Neijiaquan (internal boxing) of later generations. Medicine regards Cinnabar Field as the origin of life, which dominates all activities of life. In terms of physiological structure, it is "the foundation of five viscera and six bowels, the root of twelve meridians, the gate of breathing and the source of triple energizers", and it is the physical basis for the formation of human body. In terms of functions, it is the innate level higher than the acquired level of five viscera and six bowels, and it dominates the growth, development and functions of five viscera, six bowels, limbs and skeleton, and plays decisive roles on short or long lifespan, disease and death of human beings.

## **II. Sinking Qi to Cinnabar Field in the Eyes of Researchers**

What does "Sinking Qi to Cinnabar Field" refer to specifically? How can we "Sink Qi to Cinnabar Field"? Through consulting literatures, we find that, different researchers have somewhat different views. In the article "Can Air be Inhaled into Cinnabar Field?", Lin Yongjiang believes that, air breathing can be conducted only in lungs, while Cinnabar

Field is located in lower abdomen, and air cannot enter lower abdomen directly. Breathing not only functions exchange of air, but also results in a series of phenomena of physiological changes. He further points out that, so called “internal work” means that, under the domination of “ideas” “which use ideation but no force”, taking actions as the guidance and breathing as the driving force, so as to enable internal qi to run in the whole body at will, which is the mechanism of running of internal qi.

In the article *New Comprehension of Sinking Qi to Cinnabar Field*, Zang Baodong believes that, the qi in “Sinking Qi to Cinnabar Field” is not the air breathed, but a reflection of a kind of biological pulse which is transmitted into nerves and to cerebral cortex after various receptors of nerve endings receive external and internal stimulations of human body; qi can also be regarded as a kind of special reflection of nervous function under certain condition. When human body is exercising under a relaxing and quieting state, capillaries open under such impacts as innervation, muscle flexing and biochemical and bioelectrical changes, these perivascular nerve receptors are stimulated and then transmit nerve impulses to the brain’s sensory center, causing such feelings as “numb, hot and distending”, which is “qi” or so called “internal qi”. The running of qi is closely related to the running of blood, which coincides with the views of traditional Chinese medicine that “Blood runs if qi runs, and blood stagnates if qi stagnates”, and “Blood is the mother of qi”. He also emphasizes that both air inhalation and air exhalation can “sink Qi to Cinnabar Field”. Upon air inhalation, due to that rhythmic slow actions cause breathing to gradually become natural, deep and long, inspiratory diaphragm moves down more, and will give a kind of beneficial gentle extrusion massage to abdominal organs, thus transforming the stimulations of intra-abdominal receptors into bioelectrical impulses, which are transmitted via sensory nerves to the sensory center in brain, hence causing the feeling of “qi” rushing to the lower abdomen, which is the so called “Sinking Qi to Cinnabar Field”. Upon air exhalation, due to that diaphragm moves up, sphincter ani relaxes, lower abdominal pressure reduces, and the closed capillaries in abdomen suddenly open, there will be a kind of warm nerve feeling in abdomen, which means a success in “Sinking Qi to Cinnabar Field”.

In the article *Cinnabar Field·Sinking Qi to Cinnabar Field·Ideation of Cinnabar Field*,

Jiang Shan points out that, the Cinnabar Field referred to in “Sinking Qi to Cinnabar Field” can be located in the lower abdomen and the entire pelvic cavity of human body, namely the area in abdominal cavity below umbilicus till the bottom of pelvic cavity. In the infra-umbilical abdominal cavity, there are mainly such organs as small intestine, large intestine, kidneys, nephric duct, etc. In the pelvic cavity, in addition to bladder and rectum, a male also has an ampulla of deferent duct and a seminal vesicle; the pelvic part of deferent duct ranges from sidewall of pelvic cavity, upper back part of bladder to the bottom of bladder; and there is prostate below bladder. In the pelvic cavity of a female, there are also ovaries and oviducts, and there are uterus and vagina between bladder and rectum. “Sinking Qi to Cinnabar Field” means that genuine qi sinks from thoracic cavity via abdominal cavity down to the bottom of pelvic cavity, and it sinks slowly among various organs in thoracic, abdominal and pelvic cavities. Ideation of Cinnabar Field means that using an idea to think of that genuine qi is filled among the aforesaid organs in infra-umbilical abdominal cavity and pelvic cavity, and genuine qi gently infiltrates these organs.

### **III. Sinking Qi to Cinnabar Field and Abdominal Breathing**

The term "Sinking Qi to Cinnabar Field(qì chén dān tián)" sounds very abstruse at first, actually it means deep breathing in modern language. Generally normal breathing is thoracic breathing, which is shallow breathing relative to abdominal breathing. Abdominal breathing not only makes thoracic cavity to expand and contract more fully, and improves the air-inflation rate of pulmonary bubbles, but also causes various viscera and bowels as well as various tissues and structures such as secreting glands, junctional membranes, membrane envelopes, nerves, meridians and muscle fibers in abdominal cavity and thoracic cavity to generate relative movement, and hence gently squeeze and massage each other, which is the so-called "surging of Cinnabar Field(dān tián gǔ dòng)". The air inhaled into pulmonary alveolis by a person in breathing is impossible to enter abdominal cavity through the tissues in his body. A person has the feeling of sinking qi when he “sinks Qi to Cinnabar Field”, just because that the tissues in abdominal cavity relax and sink down. The aforesaid viewpoint was also proved when I interviewed experts, and it is found

that, when a person sinks Qi to Cinnabar Field, his caudal vertebra sinks downward and contracts forward, which changes the backward bending radian of the waist, and is more advantageous to relaxing and sinking of abdominal organs.

Different breathing patterns produce different impacts on human body. "Sinking Qi to Cinnabar Field" is a manifestation of deep breathing, and it can help human body strengthen oxygen supply and discharge large amounts of carbon dioxide, so it plays very big roles in the metabolism exchange process. The reasons lie in that, on one hand, slow and conscious deep breathing can improve the alkali content in human body, accelerate heart beating and blood circulation, thus transmit more oxygen and nutrients to human body through blood; on the other hand, trash and toxins in body are discharged out of body through deep breathing and sweats, which can effectively reduce the acid content in body, and maintain a balance of chemical compositions in human body. In addition, deep breathing can also promote shock of blood and lymphatic fluid and hence free circulation thereof, restore the connections among various nervous systems, as a result, various nerve endings also cheer up, and directly or indirectly stimulate blood vessels, which enhances the nutrition of muscle due to improvement of metabolism. Furthermore, abdomen is the place where the yin meridians among twelve meridians of the conception vessel joint together, and where many important acupuncture points and autonomic nerve plexuses of human body are distributed; deep breathing makes abdominal muscles to generate regular ups and downs, which can not only effectively stimulate relevant acupuncture points and autonomic nerves, but also massage the liver, intestines and stomach. Thus it can be seen that, abdominal breathing is a kind of scientific method in life nurturing and health care through Health Qigong for promoting the running of blood and qi.

It can be found through the aforesaid discussion that, the feeling of sinking qi in "Sinking Qi to Cinnabar Field" does not mean that the air in breathing enters abdominal cavity, but mean that various tissues in abdominal cavity relax and sink downward, due to the change in intra-abdominal pressure caused by increase in the amplitude of up and down movement of diaphragm. For beginners, they can succeed in "Sinking Qi to Cinnabar Field" from two aspects, namely changing the external shape of spinal column

and changing the breathing pattern. In aspect of shape of spinal column, it focuses on changing the radian of thoracic vertebra and lumbar vertebra; while in aspect of breathing pattern, it focuses on changing thoracic breathing to abdominal breathing.

When an exerciser succeeds in reaching the state of "Sinking Qi to Cinnabar Field" through efforts, he not only makes his thoracic cavity to expand and contract more fully, and improves the air-inflation rate of his pulmonary bubbles, but also causes various viscera and bowels as well as various secreting glands, junctional membranes, membrane envelopes, nerves, meridians and muscle fibers in abdominal cavity and thoracic cavity to squeeze and massage each other, which exerts active roles in life nurturing and health care.